REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

In the specification, new paragraph added after the paragraph beginning on page 5, line 10 is added to provide a description of new Fig. 13. The paragraph beginning on page 8, line 5 is amended to correct minor typographical errors, to provide specific antecedent basis for the phase "an inner edge" recited in claims 10 and 20 and to reference new Fig. 13.

In Figures 6-8 and 10, the polymer cross hatching has been amended to the pattern set forth in MPEP §608.2. In Figure 10, the dimensions d1 and d3 are replaced by d5 and 6, respectively. Figure 13 is new. No new matter is added. It is respectfully submitted that the drawings as amended address the examiner's concerns.

The examiner objected to the specification as failing to comply with 37 C.F.R. 1.71 and 1.75(d)(1) as failing to provide antecedent basis for the subject matter claimed in lines 1 and 2 of claims 9 and 19, and the recitation of "an inner edge" in claims 10 and 20. Applicant respectfully submits that there is proper antecedent basis for the subject matter of claims 9 and 19 in the paragraph beginning on page 6, line 5. The specification has been amended to provide specific antecedent basis for the expression "inner edge."

The examiner rejected claims 1-7, 11-17 and 21 under 35 U.S.C §102 as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,105,456 (Higashino et al.). The examiner rejected claims 1-5, 7, 8, 11-15, 17, 18 and 21 under 35 U.S.C §102 as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 2,313,780 (Snyder). The examiner rejected claims 1-8, 10-18 and 20 under 35 U.S.C §102 as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,224,117 (Olson et al.). The examiner rejected claims 1-8 and 11-18 under 35 U.S.C §102 as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,621,842 (Kowal et al.). The examiner rejected claims 1-7, 9, 11-17 and 19 under 35 U.S.C §102 as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,722,704 (Bartholoma et al.). Applicant respectfully traverse these rejections.

Independent claims 1 and 11 recite a clearance damping element including a tube engaging portion and a shaft engaging portion having a plurality of flexible fingers with at least two of the fingers having inward extending projections such that the fingers define an inner diameter less than the shaft outer diameter when the fingers are in a relaxed, unbiased condition, the fingers and projections configured such that the fingers will apply a dampening force to the shaft but will not prevent relative axial movement between the shaft and tube.

In contradistinction, Higashino et al. explains at col. 8, lns. 20-25 that the "diameter of an inscribed circle of each of the plurality of bent portions 11, 11 is set smaller than the outside

Amendments to the Drawings:

The attached drawing sheets include changes to Figs. 6, 7, 8 and 10 and add new Fig. 13. The sheet which includes Figs. 5-6 replaces the original sheet including Figs. 5-6; and the sheet which includes Figs. 7-10 replaces the original sheet including Figs. 7-10. The sheet which includes Fig. 13 is new. In Figures 6-8 and 10, the polymer cross hatching has been amended to the pattern set forth in MPEP §608.2. In Figure 10, the dimensions d1 and d3 are replaced by d5 and 6, respectively. Figure 13 is new.

Attachment: Replacement Sheets
Annotated Sheets Showing Changes

diameter of the intermediate portion of the inner shaft member 3a in a state where at least elastic ring 12 is externally fitted to each of the bent portions 11, 11 . . . ." As explained in Higashino et al. at col. 8, lns. 39-44, the bent portions 11, 11 are not provided to dampen the connection, but instead are provided simply to be engagable with the step portion 23 to prevent disengagement of the shaft and tube. There is no motivation to provide the bent portions 11, 11 with a diameter less than the shaft outside diameter in a relaxed, unbiased condition since the bent portions 11, 11 function is not related to shaft outside diameter, but instead are only related to the step portion 23. Higashino et al. teaches a distinct fastening member 6a to eliminate backlash. The fastening member 6a does not teach or suggest the present invention.

The remaining references relied on by the examiner all describe connecting systems for fixedly connecting a member to a tube or the like. See Snyder at page 5, col. 2, lns. 2-6; Olson et al. at col. 3, lns. 15-17; Kowal et al. at col. 4, lns. 16-22; and Bartholoma et al. at col. 5, lns. 39-41. None of the cited references, alone or in any reasonable combination, teaches or suggests the claimed invention.

It is respectfully submitted that pending claims 1-21 are in condition for allowance. Early reconsideration and allowance of the pending claims are respectfully requested.

If the examiner believes an interview, either telephonic or in person, will advance the prosecution of this matter, it is respectfully requested that the examiner get in contact with the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,

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Fig. 7

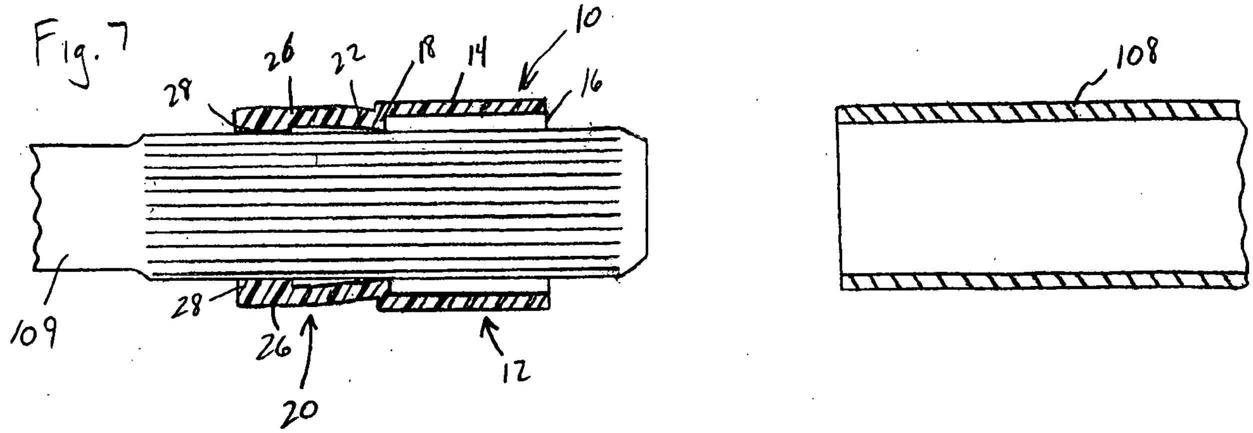


Fig. 8

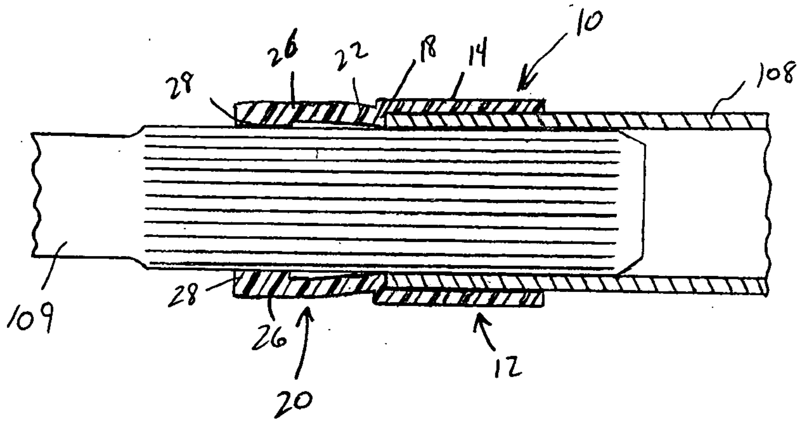


Fig. 9

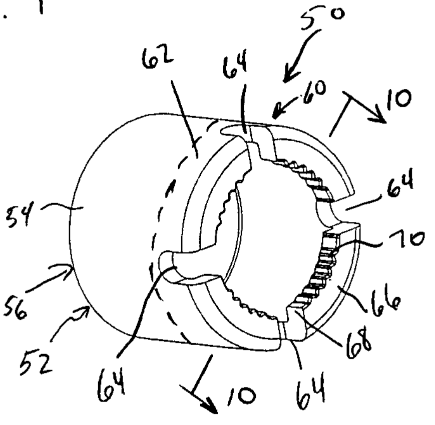
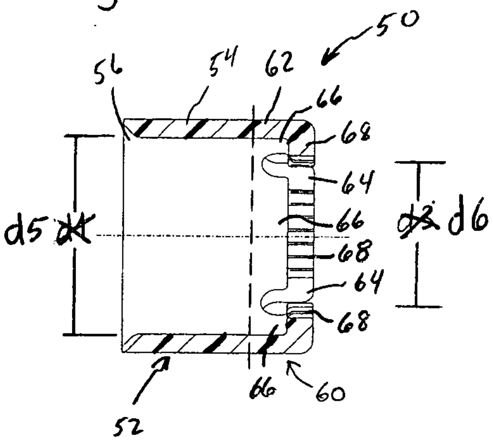


Fig. 10



ANNOTATED SHEET SHOWING CHANGES

Fig. 13